

Dear Education Committee Members:

HB5111 and HB5144 are in conflict with documented research on education and replicate failed policies of the past.

Reading First, a national initiative, tried to prescribe instructional materials and practice and it was deemed a failure in improving Reading comprehension, the very purpose of reading. The Department of Education Report tells us there was ""no statistically significant impact on student reading comprehension. Findings based on exploratory analyses do not provide consistent or systematic insight into the pattern of observed impacts." ("Reading First Impact Study Final Report - Summary").

Rather than rely on the publication industry to sell a contrived, one size fits all sets of materials that claim to address the needs of all students, students would be better served by ensuring every classroom teacher and every school was well equipped with the professional expertise to meet their needs with quality literature at every level. The further we take reading instruction away from the act of real reading for real purposes, the less likely we are to grow the readers and thinkers necessary to thrive in the 21st century.

Over and over research has shown that the most important component of a quality curriculum is the classroom teacher. World class teachers will make a difference for our students. Andrew Hargreaves, Thomas More Brennan Chair in Education at the Lynch School of Education at Boston College, is recognized as an expert in educational change, teacher professionalism and sustainable leadership. He speaks often about the role of teacher capital in highly effective schools. Please take a few minutes to listen to his thinking <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PpFTisH82Dk>.

In his book, *Unmistakable Impact* (2011), Jim Knight, research associate at the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning and president of the Instructional Coaching Group, tells us "When leaders do not honor teachers' voices, however, telling them to implement step-by-step programs or practices without asking for their thoughts or suggestions, they communicate the message that they do not trust teachers to think for themselves. To silence the voices of teachers by asking for compliance (just follow the script) rather than ideas and feedback is dehumanizing – treating teacher like objects rather than thinking creative professionals." What is needed then are quality, well trained professionals who hold themselves accountable for student learning and are willing to demonstrate to others the growth of their students.

If you are really serious about influencing early reading achievement, you will address the real issues: poverty, early oral language development and early literacy experiences for children birth to five. Developing a culture that values children, young children, and provides them every opportunity to engage in the world positively would set them on a path to success. Teaching parents, before they become parents, what young children really need to be advantaged is key to achieving this goal. This might mean required child development courses for Middle and High School students. Opening opportunities to invite young children and families of all social and economic classes to explore their world at our local zoos, gardens, museums, libraries and parks might be another way. We must continue to look for innovative ways to engage young children and their struggling and disadvantaged families to provide these early experiences and opportunities if we are ever to make a dent in this serious problem. Prescribing instructional programs will only exacerbate the problem.

Passing either of these two proposals would put schools in the position of malpractice toward our youth. Please, please, please, turn these proposals down!

Rita M. Reimbold

Parent and Grandparent of Michigan Students
English Language Arts Consultant
Ottawa Area ISD
13565 Port Sheldon Street
Holland, MI 49424
877-702-8600 ext 4114
rreimbol@oaisd.org